



Kerry was put onto Jock Hinton for help with fabrication, and has nothing but praise for the old fella. Notably, Jock helped around the interior window frames, and custom bumper, but also helped with a spot of modelling. As Kerry and Roni were piecing the Tin Man statuette together, Jock worked on the top half, and Kerry on the bottom half. "We made it on the Saturday before Beach Hop, and because the crotch ended up a bit saggy, I've been telling all in sundry that it's been modelled off Jock's crotch!" Kerry laughs.



# NO PLACE LIKE HOME

FROM THE PLAINS OF KANSAS TO THE SUBURBS OF AUCKLAND, KERRY EARL AND RONI EVANS' TRAVEL TRAILER IS READY TO SERVE AS A FUN HOME AWAY FROM HOME ONCE MORE

WORDS: CONNAL GRACE PHOTOS: ADAM CROY

"Wow!" — the one word linking hundreds of people at Repco Beach Hop 18 who had experienced the magic of this '54 Airstream caravan. But, for all the clinically executed styling cues throughout, the Airstream was — believe it or not — built almost entirely at home by Kerry Earl and Roni Evans. Its location in Kansas was the motivator behind the Wizard of Oz theme, and once the Airstream landed in Auckland, they wasted no time in pulling the thing apart. First to go was the ruined original interior, which they always planned to remodel, but they weren't expecting the chassis to be in such poor condition, necessitating a full replacement. The new chassis incorporates the grey- and fresh-water tanks, and has been built 40 per cent heavier and stronger than the old one, as Kerry was advised that a stronger chassis would

take stress off the rivets holding the body panels together, helping to eliminate the leaking issues older Airstream trailers are known to experience. Fortunately, while the chassis was toast, the original Airstream body was in surprisingly good condition, and most of the exterior panelling was reused. The body is made of Alcad aircraft aluminium bonded with rivets, in an inner and outer layer with an insulated 40mm cavity between. All of the structural strength is provided by these lightweight panels, riveted to a lightweight frame — the curvature of the 13 panelled ends is what gives these trailers their strength. Emphasizing the flowing exterior profile, Steve 'Chubby' Morrow was employed to hand-fabricate the four-corner sill panels, which would normally end in an abrupt cut-off. It's a minor addition that has a major effect on the overall look, and was used by Airstream in later models.

Striking exterior detailing aside, it's what's on the inside that completes it all, and it works so well because of the forethought put into it. Packaging was ticked off near the beginning of the build, with Kerry spending plenty of time designing the interior on CAD, due to the existing limitations of the windows, door, and wheel arches — all of which dictated where things like the toilet, fridge, and water heater could be positioned. Noticeable before all else is the custom vinyl wrap; designed, printed, and installed by The Sign Studio. Kerry met with Ryan and Brendon from The Sign Studio, and after a couple of meetings, they had it sorted. "We might have given them 20 per cent of the input, and they took liberty with their design flair!" Kerry says. Look a little closer, though, and you'll begin to notice the myriad details that really make this travel trailer a usable work of art.

## KERRY EARL AND RONI EVANS

**CAR CLUB:** Southside Streeters

**OCCUPATION:** Estimating manager (Kerry), leasing executive (Roni)

**PREVIOUSLY OWNED CARS:** 1941 Ford pickup, 1959 Ford Country Sedan

**DREAM CAR:** 1956/7 Corvette for Roni

**WHY THE AIRSTREAM?** Our great friends Graeme and Megan Wheeler got us into this cool car scene, and when they purchased their beautiful Muir caravan — which, ironically, was runner-up this year — we decided to be there as well

**BUILD TIME:** 20 months; 1350 hours; 250 hours polishing

**LENGTH OF OWNERSHIP:** Two years

**KERRY AND RONI THANK:** Darren and the guys at Morgan Engineering for use of the big machines, and welding on the chassis; Olivia and Steve at Starfish Interiors; Seamus at SeaMac Aluminium for the windows; Grant at Franklin Marine Electrical for the wiring; Graeme McNeill at Mac's Speed Shop for tools and advice; Jock Hinton and Steve 'Chubby' Morrow for fabrication; and Toby from Summers Plumbing, my awesome neighbour, for the plumbing and extra pair of hands when required



The cornering around the bathroom is aluminium extrusion for heavy transport trailers, one-piece lengths with false rivets to fit the theme, and the bathroom walls simply slot into it. Inside, the shower lining is all fibreglass over light plywood panels, finished with two-pot epoxy. Because of its complex shape, they had no choice but to make it themselves, and the looming Beach Hop date saw them fibreglassing some of the larger panels on Christmas morning (2017), much to Roni's annoyance! And check out those cabinet doors. All the woodwork was done by Kerry, who is a builder by

trade, and the stained American Ash doors feature custom-swaged and riveted panels. "I bought a bead roller off Graeme McNeill at Mac's Speed Shop, and the cabinet doors were my first attempt at bead rolling. Now, I can do stuff like the drip rail over the door — I'm very proud of that." A bit of assistance from the talented Jock Hinton, and the metal side of the equation came together flawlessly, topped off by flush-fitting sliding windows courtesy of SeaMac Aluminium in Whangarei. It's not all metal and hardwood, though — the

bed has been covered in possum fur, and features storage built into the frame, while the horseshoe-shaped sofa seats eight, and has been trimmed in distressed leather. The custom mattress and upholstery was completed by Starfish Interiors, and Kerry and Roni have nothing but praise for Olivia and Steve. Kerry and Roni will be the first to tell you that they haven't been in the V8 scene for very long, but with several cool cars in their garage, and a build like this on the resumé, there's no question that they belong. That almost makes the build time, stress, and expense all worthwhile for them. **V8**



The lift-up bed has storage built in beneath, and there is a big exterior service drawer that slides out from the rear of the caravan. With a spare tyre and tools, it really has been designed as a practical and usable home away from home.

